DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 221 639 UD 022 534

AUTHOR Nogueras, Juan A.; Prewitt-Diaz, Joseph O.
TITLE The Remigration of the Puerto Rican Student as a Factor in School Adjustment.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adjustment (to Environment); Bilingual Education; Bilingual Education Programs; Economic Factors; Elementary Secondary Education; *Migrant Youth; Migration; *Puerto Ricans; *Student Characteristics; *Student Mobility; *Transfer Students
IDENTIFIERS *Puerto Rico

ABSTRACT

The growing number of Puerto Rican return migrants (those who return to Puerto Rico after having lived in the United States mainland for several years) face sociological, psychological, and linguistic and social adaptation problems. To meet these students' linguistic needs, the Puerto Rican Department of Education has developed several bilingual education programs. Some studies indicate that, compared to non-migrant students, return migrant students are more poorly adjusted to school, lack confidence, feel inferior, have low self-esteem, and are often described by teachers as low achievers, troublemakers, aggressive, undisciplined, disrespectful, lacking identity, and unable to speak either English or Spanish well. However, some teachers believe that return migrants will react positively when they feel that teachers and their non-migrant peers are trying to understand them. The problem of the return migrant student should be regarded not only as a linguistic problem, but also as one of adjustment to two cultures. (Author/MJL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED221639

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Joseph O. Prewitt-Diaz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

THE REMIGRATION OF THE PUERTO RICAN STUDENT AS A FACTOR IN SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

Juan A. Nogueras[1] and Joseph O. Prewitt-Diaz[2]

The Pennsylvania State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

[1]Mr. Nogueras is a doctoral candidate in the Division of Curriculum and Instruction

[2]Dr. Prewitt-Diaz, an Educational Psychologist, is currently the Coordinator of the Bilingual Education Programs

UD 022 534

THE REMIGRATION OF THE PUERTO RICAN STUDENT
AS A FACTOR IN SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to discuss the effect of the remigration process of the Puerto Rican from the mainland to the islands.

The remigrant student is a new phenomenon within the school system of Puerto Rico. The effects of this new element cannot be determined until more information is collected. School adjustment problems have been found by researchers and school administrators. However, the majority of results that have been reported are contradictory. In order to understand the return-migrant student adjustment process, socio-psychological studies in areas such as self-estimation, the extent of acculturation, and socialization are recommended.

THE REMIGRATION OF THE PUERTO RICAN STUDENT AS A FACTOR IN SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

The purpose of the report was to discuss the effect of the remigration process of Puerto Ricans from the mainland to the island. Up to 1976-77 the average remigration was 40,000 per year. On returning to the island many have tried to further education only to realize that their lack of communication skills, both in English and Spanish, hinders their efforts (San Juan Star, 1980).

In the last four years, thousands of families have returning to Puerto Rico after living in the United States for several years. During the 1980-81 school year, school-age children of these families increased the student population of the Puerto Rican Public School System (Department of Education, 1980) by more than 9%.

Migration as a Relieve of Unemployment and Overpopulation

The Puerto Rican movement to the mainland as contract labor groups following World War II provided the nucleus from which present Puerto Rican communities arose in the United States (Maldonado, 1979). Both governments, United States and Puerto Rican, contributed to increase the migration movement. After the second World War every effort was made to employ and move to the mainland as many Puerto Ricans as were available (Maldonado, 1979).

Puerto Ricans were contracted to work as industrial workers, in Lorain, Ohio in 1947 and Gary, Indiana in 1948. They were also contracted as agricultural laboreres in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Buffalo, New York (Maldonado, 1979). The recruiting of labor in Puerto Rico began as early as the occupation of the Island by the United States after the Spanish-American War in 1898. The importation of workers from Puerto Rico was developed as a means to alleviate the agricultural labor shortage in several states. Thousands of skilled and unskilled workers were imported by the middle of the 1940's.

In addition, the government of Puerto Rico considered migration to the mainland as a way of relieving unemployment and overpopulation. Their efforts resulted in a great movement of Puerto Ricans to the United States. "My relative in America is doing well and he has sent for me" was a very popular phrase on the Island around the fifties.

The Puerto Rican population on the mainland has increased from 301,375 in 1950 to 1,830,000 in 1978 (Prewitt Diaz, 1981). The American citizenship of the Puerto Ricans since 1917 facilitated the migration movement.

Remigration to Puerto Rico

During the 1970's the government of Puerto Rico faced the problem of reverse migration or remigration; the return of many Puerto Ricans from the mainland United States to the Island. There are currently 59,812 remigrates in the public

schools of Puerto Rico. These students faced sociological, psychological and linguistic adaptation problems (San Juan Star, 1980). These students were described as having the same cultural roots as the Puerto Ricans on the Island but different cultural patterns.

Efforts of the Department of Public Instruction of Puerto Rico to Serve the Remigrate Pupils

The Puerto Rican Department of Education developed a Bilingual Education Program in August, 1978 as part of the regular academic program to serve those who returned and those who were potential migrants to the States (Department of Education, 1978). The program incorporated all independent Bilingual Education Projects into one organizational unit. At present, it is still composed of six projects.

1. An Early Childhood Bilingual Education Project, designed to provide special intensive training in English to Spanish-speaking students from kindergarten to third grade who are potential migrants to the United States.
2. The Upper Elementary Bilingual Education Project designed to serve children from fourth to sixth grade who live in areas of high mobility to and from the United States.
3. The Transition to Spanish Project, started during the 1979-80 school year, created to serve students in the fourth and seventh grades that return

from the States and are not proficient in Spanish.

4. State-funded Bilingual Secondary Schools, designed to assist English-speaking and talented Spanish-speaking students interested in learning English as a second language.

5. The Cultural Bilingual Project for High School Students, geared toward the enrichment of educational opportunities for Puerto Rican pupils who return from the United States.

6. Bilingual Instruction for Parents, created to serve parents of students who participate in the bilingual programs.

What Did Puerto Rico Learn from Dual Language Programs from Remigrates?

Remigration has been identified as a real educational problem in Puerto Rico. The remigrate students face language and cultural barriers. Most need help in both language arts and social adaptation skills. In addition, the majority of parents lack the skills needed to help their children.

The following statements made by a remigrate student expresses the root of the problem: "When I first came down here, I felt so lost that I wanted to go back to the States." "When I first got to Puerto Rico I was scared because I only knew a little Spanish" (San Juan Star, August, 1980).

Kavetzky (1978) contended that teachers and school officials tend to stereotype remigrate students as low-achieving, trouble-making, aggressive, undisciplined, disrespectful, lacking identity, and not knowing either English or Spanish. On the other hand, English teachers and teachers who themselves were once classified as remigrates tend to believe that remigrate students will react positively when they feel that teachers and non-migrant peers attempt to understand them. This also occurs when the teacher is tolerant of their attempts to express themselves; be it in English, Spanish or the characteristic mixing of English and Spanish.

Ramos Perea's (1978) study offered findings based upon a sample of 1,973 students, of which 1,069 were remigrates and 904 non-migrants. The conceptual scheme was the relationship of migration experience and school adjustment. Factors like residential mobility, period of residence, social status, and ability in Spanish were considered.

Ramos Perea (1978) indicated that remigrate students were more poorly adjusted to school than non-migrant students. The study also supported an association between poor school adjustment and low residential mobility, long periods of residence, low social status, and low ability in Spanish. The study suggested the existence of an intimate relationship between school adjustment and length of residence in the United States. School maladjustment was

found more often among remigrates with a long, as compared to a short, residence in the United States. The longer they stay in the United States, the more assimilated the migrants become in the cultural, social, and linguistic patterns of the United States. The extent of acculturation, assimilation, and socialization in each culture (Puerto Rico or United States) may determine the extent of maladjustment of migrant students in another culture. Lack of confidence, feelings of inferiority, and low self-estimation were other findings of the study.

Recommendations

1. Indepth studies should be conducted which contain maturational, aspirational, or attitudinal information. This would enable Puerto Ricans to determine the significance of migration for the individual remigrate, as well as provide a clearer notion of the human resources Puerto Rico is receiving from the remigration process.
2. The remigration problem of students from the mainland has to be analyzed within the framework of acculturation. Maladjustment, as a result of socio-psychological problems and cultural conflicts which parents do not often understand themselves becomes an unexplained cross-ethnic phenomenon with special attributes.

3. This writer feels that an additional period of time is necessary for cultural/environment orientation before the remigrate child is placed in the classroom. It is important to note that in the remigration process the parents belong to the host country but children are in a foreign country.

Conclusion

The "new Puerto Ricans," also referred to as Neoucons, are the result of the remigration ideology of their parents, which consists of a desire to retain their own subculture when they are in the United States, based upon their desire to return to the island. Children are brought up with the implicit mission of taking knowledge required in the industrialized country back to the developing country.

The problem of the remigrant student in Puerto Rico is mainly concerned with biculturalism. Although the linguistic factor permeates the whole process of school adjustment, it seems that the socio-psychological factor should be considered first. Vesquez and Richard (1978) suggested that school performance depended more on social class differences than whether the student was monolingual or bilingual.

Bibliography

Departamento de Instrucción Pública, Bilingual Education Projects in Puerto Rico, 1978, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico

Departamento de Instrucción Pública, Estudio Sobre Estudiantes Procedentes de Estados Unidos, mayo 1978, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico.

Eppink, Andreas, Socio-psychological problems of migrant children and cultural conflicts. International Migration, 1979, 17, 87-119.

Friedman, Robert. Students back from the states find a cold shoulder. The San Juan Star, August, 1980, pp. 1; 26.

Kavetsky, Joseph, The return migrant student: Questions and answers. El Sol, 1978, 22, 11-17.

Maldonado, Edwin, Contract labor and the origins of Puerto Rican communities in the United States. International Migration Review, 1979, 13, 103-121.

Prewitt-Díaz, Joseph, The conflicts in in-school cultural behavior of the Puerto Rican migrants children on the mainland. Unpublished manuscript, 1980. (Available from author's address).

Ramos, Israel, Migrant adjustment to the school setting. El Sol, 1978, 22, 25-30.

The San Juan Star, July 23, 1980, p. 5, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The San Juan Star, August 24, 1980, P. 1, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Triandis, Harry C., The analysis of subjective culture. New York: John Wiley and Son, Inc., 1972.

U.S. Department of Education. Nondiscrimination under programs receiving federal financial assistance through the Education Department, Federal Register, August 5, 1980.

Zapata, Ellit. Public Schools will have new bilingual programs. The San Juan Star, July, 1980, pp. 2-3.